[Dave May]

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Phipps, Woody

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Dave May, 63, was born Feb. 4, 1874, on his father's farm, 20 mi. [?]. of [Waco?], Tex. Being taught to ride a horse at a very tender age, [?] [became?] so interested that he was doing regular cowboy work by the time he was eight years old. Recollections of rustler hanging days are still vivid in him memory. After the death of his father in 1892. Dave sold both ranch and cattle and became engaged as a peace officer, serving in a number of Texas cities, until his retirement. He now resides at the Chandler Hotel, [Fort?] Worth, Tex. His story:

“I was born and reared on the range when there wasn't a fence in the whole country, except for hospital stuff. I was born Feb. 4, 1874, on my dad's ranch, about 20 miles west of Waco, Tex.

“I can remember when I was about eight yearn old, dad's herd was about 12,000 head, which he ran in the '[D?] Bar' iron. I couldn't tell you how many he run before, because I wasn't interested enough in it. All I was interested in, while a kid, was ridin' hosses and runnin' herd.

“I really can't tell you just when I started riding, because it seems like to me that I've been riding all my life. Of course, after I entered the peace officer work, I didn't do much riding; and, as time wore on, peace officers did less and less riding. At the age of eight I was

busting broncs - not [?] hosses, but broncs. A bronc is a half-busted wild hoss, Bill Owens done most of the wild hoss busting; he was a [cracker-jack?] at it.

“We didn't have nothing but good riders and sure shots in that country while I was a kid, unless they were women or kids. [??] 2 Phipps, Woody

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The men we had riding for us were Bill [Fogue?], Fayette Foard, [Will?] Simpson, and a number of nigger ex-slaves dad brought with him form Tennessee after the war. All of them were good riders, ropers, and sure shots.

“Funny thing about those niggers. They would have given their lives for dad, even though he owned them as slaves and they worked for him for no salary. They got money for cowpunching, but not during slavery days. The thing about it was that they were born on dad's plantation and their last names were May, the same as ours, because that was the rule in plantation days. These niggers would go around just as if they were one of the family, and never stopped calling dad 'Marster', that is when they spoke to him.

The cow work was made tougher because there was so much hoss and critter thieves' going on. There was lots of rustlers and, every so often, one of them would be naturalized. That is, he would be made a good citizen by a committee of amy number. The process, on the whole, was to tie [his?] hands behind him, sit him on his hoss, tie a rope to his neck, and tie the other end to a handy tree limb, then have somebody slap his hoss with their hats. While I've seen [lynchings?], and so on, I never saw a rustler in the act of being naturalized.

“When I was a little over eight years old, I had in experience with the 'ornery raskals that shore like to put me in my grave. It was one Sunday morning, and dad and me was out on the front porch, a-reading the Dallas News and the Cincinnatti Inquirer. All of a sudden, dad says: 'Dave, go get that herd of 3 Phipps, [Woody?]

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mules down by the Little Bosky (that was a creek on the place), and bring 'em up here. I want to do something with'em. To say that I was surprised was putting it mildly, because dad never worked on Sunday; and he didn't want any of his hands to work.

“We had a hoss corral near the house, where we kept three or four saddle hosses for emergency. People, nowadays, would call 'em a hoss lots but we called 'em hoss corrals. Well, I saddle one up and lit out for the mule herd. On the way, I was doing like any kid does. “When my hands weren't busy, I'd daydream, and that was what I was doing; just riding along with my head down and paying no attention to where I was going. I didn't have to direct the hoss, because when you'd set 'em in a straight line they'd usually try to keep in that direction without but little varying. That was a good cow-hoss for you.

“The first time I looked up was what the creek caused my hose to slightly stumble. I looked up, and there, staring right into my face, was two men that had been hung. Their eyes were all bugged out, and their tongues were sticking out, all red and swollen. It actually scared me so bad that I fell off the hoss backwards, right into the creek. I didn't even try to mount again, but figured I needed a lotta distance fast, and I felt like I could outrun that hoss. The hose was scared by my actions and passed me on the way to the hoss corral.

“By the time I'd ran all the way home, I was all tuckered out and just fell on the front porch. Mother happened to see me coming, and sure got excited, especially when she saw me fall down on the porch like that. She said: 'Dave, what in the world's 4 Phipps, Woody

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the matter?'.

“I couldn't answer, so she said: 'Pa, what's the matter with Dave?

'He says: 'Aw, he probably fell off of a hoss. Anyway, he wasn't killed, so I don't see any cause for such a ruckus'. After I got my breath so's could talk I told 'em what I,d seem. Dad said:'Well, if that's so, you ride over to [?] place and tell him to come over here'. I saddled me another hoss, because the hose I'd rode to the mule herd was pretty well jittered up, and took out for [?] place.

“I told [?], and he said to go back and he'd bring the coroner with him when he came over. Then they got to our place, everybody went down to the place where the men had been hung. I never went. The only other time I saw anything of 'em was when they passed the ranch house in a couple of long wooden boxes. The [coroner?] found that they'd died at the hands of parties. I don't know whether he really felt that way or not, but I said to myself, Ben Foard, I know who done it, and my dad was one of 'em.

“These rustlers were hoss thieves, and they had a big herd of 'em. We were two weeks gathering them all up; and people came from Austin, Bremond, and all around, to claim hosses. I think that we wound up with about 15 that nobody was able to claim. Up 'til

the time dad died, in 1892,, I asked him every once-in-while if he wasn't one of the executioners, but he always said no.

“Speaking of gathering cattle up, we had regular times to 5 Phipps [Woody?]

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do this. We had a spring roundup to brand all the mavericks; and the fall roundup in October and November, when we cut out all the fat critters for sale. Times have changed since then, and now most ranches don't have anything but fat cattle. The times I'm speaking of was when nearly all cattle were longhorns.

“Anytime you gathered up a herd of cattle, you could just bet on it that you'd have several near-stampedes, or you's have the real article; because a skunk, any kind of a wild animal, or a storm, would start 'em on their way, especially an electric storm, with plenty of lightning flashing from their horns. It seemed like lightning was attracted to their horns, like iron to a magnet, and that nearly always put then on the stomp.

“Just one way to quiet 'em, too: and that's to sing and talk to 'em like you wasn't scared of nothing. It'd work about half the time - the other half, wow!

“The country around our place was pretty level, and there weren't many step-offs; so that saved a lot of beef from destruction by failing over and have others fall on them and crush them to pieces. There were always enough stuff skunt, though, to have a hospital place. That was a gully hemmed in on three sides by a wash, on the Bosky, and the open end stopped with brush. [We?] put hurt stuff in this place, and doctored it myself.

“Once a stomp started, it was up to the cowpunchers to stop it at all costs, because every mile ran off valuable beef, let alone that beef that was damaged. The manner we stopped them was for as many as could to get out in front and turn the leader, which would start them to milling around, and stopping the stomp. I never heard of more than one man being able to get out in front 6 [Phipps?], [Woody?]

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at a time, because the cowpunchers took an awful risk to get out there. Nearly all the stomps happened at night, and the cowpuncher wouldn't be able to see a thing. The hoss would almost have to go entirely by instinct, and they'd never know when they'd step into a gopher hole, get spilled, and probably break the hosses leg, which meant that he's have to be shot. Any cowpuncher that got thrown stood a change of breaking his neck if he was unable to light in the customary manner, that is, feet first. Hoss busters learnt that early in the game.

“Then, if he did get off safe, and happened to be out in front, you can imagine what'd happen to him after 500 to 3,000 critters ran over him.The good part of all the stomps I ever saw was that nobody got seriously hurt. Sometimes, they'd show up with a skunt place, but they'd never even mention that.

“Another of the serious problems the rancher had was the drouth periods. At that time, dad'd have to sell off all the beef, except the select mother cows. Then, we'd have to cut down cactus plants and burn the stickers off to got feed. In the winter time. [I've?] cut down many a tree so's the critters could eat what few leaves they'd find. [At?] the end of a

drouth, all the stuff would be poor and thin as a rail. Some of 'em wouldn't live through it, if it was extra tough.

'Oh yes, the chuck wagon: [We?] had one of the best in that part of the country. It was never used except on roundups, but was extra handy then, because the cowboy's life outside sure raises an appetite. It's about the hardest work there is, and the roughest. It ages men mighty fast, and many's the cowpuncher 7 [Phipps?] [Woody?]

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that's it for nothing but the chuck wagon, at 50. Busting wild hoses breaks a man's ribs in, ruptures his insides, and plays [?] in general, when the hoss buster makes only one bad move; just one, and he's done, unless he's lucky. I guess that's the reason I was never so hot for busting the wild ones. I would mount the broncs, though. I can recall old cooky, now, all bent over, groaning everytime he'd pick up a chip for the [?], and all. None of us ever knew his story, though, even though we did guess a little about it. He just didn't want any sympathy, and would bawl you out for even trying to make it easy for him. He'd say, 'Get the hell out of here! When I get so stove up that I need a flunky, I wont bother anybody any more!

“After dad died, in 1892, I got the place, lock, stock and barrel. Since I'd always wanted to be a peace officer, I sold it out just like I got it, and took my first job at [Waco?]. After that, I worked in a good many Texas towns, until I retired on account of my age.